

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims:

Claims 1 – 28 (Cancelled).

29. (New) A method for identifying an anti-streptococcal agent, which method comprises:

(a) providing, as a first component, an isolated streptococcal M protein or a functional variant thereof;

(b) providing, as a second component, isolated fibrinogen or a functional variant thereof;

(c) providing, as a third component, an isolated α_2 integrin or a functional variant thereof;

(d) contacting said components with a test substance under conditions that would permit the components to interact in the absence of the test substance; and

(e) determining whether the test substance inhibits the interaction between the components;
thereby to determine whether a test substance is an anti-streptococcal agent; or which method comprises:

(f) providing, as a first component, a streptococcal M protein or a functional variant thereof;

(g) providing, as a second component, fibrinogen or a functional variant thereof;

(h) providing, as a third component, one or more polymorphonuclear neutrophils (PMNs);

(i) contacting said components with a test substance under conditions that would permit the components to interact in the absence of the test substance; and

(j) monitoring any inhibition of the activation of PMNs;
thereby to determine whether a test substance is an anti-streptococcal agent.

30. (New) A method according to claim 29 wherein step (i) comprises contacting *S. pyogenes*, fibrinogen and PMNs in the presence of a test substance.

31. (New) A method according to claim 29 wherein inhibition of the activation of PMNs is monitored by measuring the release of heparin binding protein (HBP).

32. (New) A method according to claim 29 wherein the first component is provided by contacting *Streptococcus pyogenes* with a protease.

33. (New) A method according to claim 32 wherein the protease is derived from a PMN.

34. (New) A method according to claim 32 wherein the protease is endogenous to *S. pyogenes*.

35. (New) A method according to claim 29 wherein the streptococcal M protein is the M1 protein of *S. pyogenes*, a homologue thereof which maintains the ability to form a complex with fibrinogen, or a functional variant of either thereof which maintains the ability to form a complex with fibrinogen.

36. (New) A method according to claim 35, wherein the functional variant is a fragment of the M1 protein of *S. pyogenes* or a fragment of a homologue thereof.

37. (New) A method according to claim 29, wherein step (e) comprises determining whether the components form aggregates in the presence of the test substance.

38. (New) A test kit comprising:

- (a) an isolated streptococcal M protein or a functional variant thereof;
- (b) isolated fibrinogen or a functional variant thereof; and
- (c) an isolated β_2 integrin or a functional variant thereof;

wherein said test kit is suitable for use in identifying a test substance which is capable of inhibiting the interaction between a streptococcal M protein or a functional variant thereof,

fibrinogen and a functional variant thereof and a β_2 integrin or a functional variant thereof; or a test kit comprising:

- (d) a streptococcal M protein or a functional variant thereof;
- (e) fibrinogen or a functional variant thereof; and
- (f) one or more PMNs;

wherein said test kit is suitable for use in identifying a test substance which is capable of inhibiting the interaction between a streptococcal M protein or a functional variant thereof, fibrinogen or a functional variant thereof and PMNs.

39. (New) A test kit according to claim 38 which further comprises one or more buffers.

40. (New) A test kit according to claim 38 further comprising means for determining whether a test substance disrupts the interaction between the components.

41. (New) An anti-streptococcal agent identified by a method according to claim 29.

42. (New) A method of treating an individual suffering from a streptococcal infection, which method comprises:

(a) administering a therapeutically effective amount of an agent identified by a method according to claim 29 to a said individual; or which method comprises:

(b) administering a therapeutically effective amount of an integrin antagonist to a said individual; or which method comprises:

(c) administering a therapeutically effective amount of an inhibitor of the interaction between streptococcal M protein, fibrinogen and β_2 integrin to a said individual; or which method comprises:

(d)(i) identifying an agent that inhibits the interaction between

streptococcal M protein, fibrinogen and Ξ_2 integrin; and

(ii) administering a therapeutically effective amount of the inhibitor thus identified to a said individual.

43. (New) A method according to claim 42 wherein the integrin antagonist is an anti-integrin antibody, a peptide mimetic or a non-peptide mimetic.

44. (New) A method according to claim 42 wherein the inhibitor of the interaction between streptococcal M protein, fibrinogen and β_2 integrin is a peptide comprising the sequence GPRP.

45. (New) A method according to claim 42 wherein the inhibitor of the interaction between streptococcal M protein, fibrinogen and β_2 integrin is an antibody which specifically binds the B-repeats of *S. pyogenes* M1 protein.

46. (New) A pharmaceutical composition comprising an inhibitor of the interaction between streptococcal M protein, fibrinogen and Ξ_2 integrin identified by a method of claim 29 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.

47. (New) A method for providing a pharmaceutical composition, which method comprises:

(a) identifying an agent that inhibits the interaction between streptococcal M protein, fibrinogen and β_2 integrin by a method according to claim 29; and

(b) formulating the inhibitor thus identified with a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier or diluent.